**Students Enjoy Breakfast in the Bluegrass**

**By Erin Gibbons**
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Wayne County Middle School (WCMS) in Monticello, Kentucky, celebrated March's National Nutrition Month in a unique way this year. With the help of grant funding from the Action for Healthy Kids-Kellogg's School Breakfast to School Wellness partnership, WCMS launched a "Breakfast in the Bluegrass" campaign with the goal of increasing participation in its breakfast program. Thanks to a joint effort between teachers, staff and students, more than half of WCMS students are now eating school breakfast, a 12 percent increase from earlier in the school year.



Teachers and school nutrition officials knew that kids who eat school breakfast perform better academically and consume more milk and fruits than those who eat breakfast elsewhere, and they wanted more students to "join the breakfast club." After a survey found that 50 percent of the kids didn't like the food being offered, it was clear that more student input was needed. So, during the week of March 19, students got the opportunity to sample new breakfast foods, such as whole-grain breakfast cookies, mini waffles and *Grab N' Go*. After "taste testing" each new item, they were able to indicate whether they liked it on a display posted in the cafeteria.

"Taste testing was a hit with students, and as we implemented the popular items into the menus, students found that we appreciated their voices," says Karen Gibson, WCMS's food service director and a registered dietitian. "We heard students talk more favorably about the foods offered and how the lunch ladies really did listen to them."

Seventh-grader Hannah Stonewall said she isn't hungry and is in a better mood because of the school breakfast program. "I like the new *Grab N' Go* menu options that [have been] offered lately, which make it easier to take with you," she explains.

The school also held a pep rally for school breakfast with mascot "Ms. Bluegrass Breakfast" and created incentives for breakfast participation, such as giving kids who ate breakfast three times a week special dress-up days and "Activity Fridays." Students did their part, too, incorporating messages about the benefits of breakfast into the school's morning announcements. The combined efforts have had a positive impact.

"The students have worked really hard on the campaign," Gibson said. "The greatest difference in participation has been with student involvement and integrating their input into the breakfast program."





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